

Indicator RECOMMENDED	Early Initiation of Alcohol Use
<b>Justification</b>	Initiation of alcohol use at young ages, especially in pre-adolescence, has been linked to more intense and problematic levels of use in adolescence and adulthood. Young people who consume alcohol are more likely than adults to binge drink. Purchase of alcohol by persons under the age of 21 is illegal.
<b>Definition</b>	Percent of students in grades 9 through 12 who report first use of alcohol before age 13 (more than just a few sips)
<b>Data Source</b>	Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<b>Frequency</b>	Biennial
<b>Geographic levels</b>	National and State
<b>Demographic Categories</b>	Grade Level, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity
<b>Strengths</b>	<p>This measure may be defined for all respondents, unlike average age of first use, which can only be defined for users. YRBSS estimates are typically based on larger samples than the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, and can be further broken down by grade level, gender, and race/ethnicity. Some states also collect YRBSS data for individual communities or school districts, which can be compared with their state-level data.</p>
<b>Limitations</b>	<p>Cut-point of 13 years may not be sensitive to changes in average age of first use across the age continuum. As of 2003, weighted representative samples were only available for 32 states. Not all states participate, and some participating states do not provide representative samples. YRBSS is a school-based survey, so students who have dropped out of school are not represented. It is also subject to bias due to self-report, non-coverage (refusal by selected schools to participate), and non-response (refusal/no answer). Estimates for subgroups may have relatively low precision (i.e., large confidence intervals).</p>